

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

OLD RECORDS OF SOME SCARCE OR LITTLE-KNOWN SPECIES FROM KENYA

The following records of scarce or little-known species have come to light during researches associated with the Kenyan bird atlas scheme (Lewis & Pomeroi in prep.), and supplement data given in Britton (1980) and other sources.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

The following records of this species at Ziwa Estates, Hoey's Bridge (now Moi's Bridge, 0.57N, 35.08E) are extracted from a handwritten MS, endorsed by the late M.E.W. North, that is housed in the offices of the East African Natural History Society at the National Museum, Nairobi.

Winter 1947/48, 2 (no further details)

Winter 1950/51, 1 (no further details)

Winter 1956/57, 1 full plumage drake plus an immature
Teal *Anas crecca*.

The highland locality and small numbers of individuals are typical of this duck in Kenya.

White-eyed Pochard *Aythya nyroca*

An adult male was present on a dam at El Karama Ranch (0.08N, 36.54E), near Nanyuki, on 26 January 1972 at a time when there were also large numbers of Pintail *Anas acuta*, Shoveler *Anas clypeata* and Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* in the area; a full and convincing description has been submitted by the observer (L.V.J. Grant in litt.).

Depending on the precise date of a bird collected at Lake Ol Bolossat during the winter of 1972/73, this constitutes the seventh or eighth record of this species for Kenya (Meadows & Pearson 1981).

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1957) recorded this species from Mt Kenya, but Britton (1980) was only able to quote a single, unconfirmed, recent record from the mountain, from the Sirimon track on 7 August 1975. The most recent confirmed record may thus be represented by a specimen in the collection of the National Museum, Nairobi: this is an adult female, collected by J.R.M. Tennent on 10 September 1961, from *Hagenia* woodland at 11 000 feet (3350 m) a.s.l., on the slopes of the mountain above Naro Moru (0.10S, 37.01E).

Hinde's Pied Babbler *Turdoides hindei*

The following records supplement those given by Plumb (1979):

1. in an undated MS entitled 'Kitui District, June 1960 to April 1961' kept by the East African Natural History Society, Nairobi, J.R.M. Tennent describes this species as "common in bushy valleys over 3,500' (=1066 m)". Plumb (1979) noted only one record from the Kitui area, that of a bird collected in 1918.

2. in the 1950s before 1956, P.M. Allen (pers. comm.) recorded this species as "quite common" on a farm a few miles west of Ruiru (1.09S, 36.58E), and observed one party feeding an immature Black and White Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*; a single bird of this species was again seen on this farm in 1956. These records extend the range of the species approximately 35 km west from Ol Donyo Sapuk (1.08S, 37.15E), where it was last encountered in 1970, and constitute the earliest record of this host (Plumb 1979).

Red-naped Bush Shrike *Laniarius ruficeps*

In October 1956, P.M. Allen (pers. comm.) observed "many" immatures in coastal

bush near Kiunga village (1.45S, 41.21E) in southeast Kenya, and the identification was confirmed by a specimen collected by M.E.W. North. Britton (1980) suggested that a sight record of several in the Mundane Range near Kiunga in August 1971 referred to the Somali coastal race *kismayensis*.

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- Adrian D. Lewis, Department of Geology, University of Nairobi, Box 30197, Nairobi
- Received 29 March 1983
- Scopus* 7: 89-90, September/December 1983

A PAIR OF WHITE-BACKED NIGHT HERONS *GORSACHIUS LEUCONOTUS* IN SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK, TANZANIA

The White-backed Night Heron is a rarely seen bird anywhere within its range in East Africa (Britton 1980).

On 27 June 1981 we were camping in Serengeti National Park about 200 m west of the Kirawira Rangers' Post (c. 2.10S 34.30E), about 40 km east of Lake Victoria. Our campsite was on the left bank of the Grumeti River, near several unused National Parks' rondavels. The habitat is gallery forest with large trees, thick undergrowth and dense bushes bordering the river.

At about 06:30 MK approached the river bank and flushed what was immediately recognized as a White-backed Night Heron. The bird landed across the river, here about 10 m wide, and was promptly displaced by an Eastern Grey Plantain Eater *Crinifer zonurus*. Before flying off to MK's side of the river again it raised its crest slightly and fanned out its white scapulars. A few minutes later, from a very dense overhanging bush about 15 m downstream, the heron was flushed again, this time followed by another; both birds landed across the river in the tree where the first bird was originally sighted. The two birds were watched for about 20 min until they walked deeper into the vegetation.

They were rather deliberate and seemed unconcerned about the presence of an observer. They recalled the Neotropical Boat-billed Heron *Cochlearius cochlearius* in their demeanour.

The rufous colour of the breast was more vibrant than expected, the white back plumes always visible, the white chin and the eye ring very conspicuous, even on the bird sitting in the shadows; the crest was flat against the nape except at one point, when the presumed male initiated a courtship gesture: facing the other bird with slightly lowered head, it partially raised its crest and fanned out its pure white lanceolated scapulars in a shallow V. This behaviour lasted two or three minutes until, eventually the bird walked slowly into the shadows.

Returning to the site a short time later with PA, we flushed one heron from the same dense bush on the left bank; it landed across the stream in the same